

Sport

SEA Games Hosts' happy haul

CHIANG MAI, Dec 10: Host Thailand pleased home fans by taking the first gold medals and setting new records in the first full day of competition at the 18th Southeast Asian (SEA) Games today, reports Reuter.

Two Thai cyclists picked up the first gold medals of the biennial events, with Chalerm Chanchun winning the women's 25-km individual time trial and Suphat Srisawai bagging the gold for the men's 50-km time trial.

Thailand's Sunisa Yoo Yao shattered her old record by more than two metres to win gold in the women's shot put and set a SEA Games record of 16.56 metres.

Fellow Thai Benjamas Ounkewaw took the silver while Burma's Aye Aye Nwe won a bronze.

Suchat Pichi and Anupan Attha-Insee of Thailand were one-two winners in the men's 3-metre springboard diving competition, with local favourite Suchat executing several difficult, crowd-pleasing dives.

Thailand also dominated the medals at the shooting range, winning a total of five including two golds, Malaysia, Burma and Vietnam took two medals each.

By the middle of the first full day of competition, Thailand was leading the medal count with eight, including five golds, Indonesia, the winner of the 1993 SEA Games, was second with four medals while Malaysia was third with three.

More than 3,000 athletes from 10 countries are participating in the Chiang Mai SEA Games, which officially opened on Saturday in a gala celebration of fireworks, traditional Thai dancing and a music light show.

The athletes will vie for a total of 334 gold medals, 334 silver medals and 421 bronze medals in 28 sports.

Indonesia, who won the most medals in the 1993 games in Singapore, are expecting a tough fight with Thailand to take the medals crown this year.

Thailand, which was second on the medals list in 1993, have the largest contingent of 640 athletes, followed by Malaysia then Indonesia, officials said.

Other countries represented are Brunei, Burman, Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam.

UN soccer games on UNITED NATIONS, Dec 10: Thousands of soccer matches will be played around the world beginning on Saturday in a 24-hour-long celebration honouring the 50th anniversary of the United Nations, reports Reuter.

"Over 120 countries will host games that do this kind of salute, and they cover every part of the globe and every continent," under-secretary-general Gillian Sorensen told a news conference on Thursday.

The event has been organised with the help of the International Federation of Football Associations (FIFA), the governing body of world soccer.

One or two countries in each of the world's 24 time zones have been specially selected to ensure the continuity of the chain of matches in what is being called "the day the world played football."

Aussies toy with Lankans



PERTH, Dec 10: Sri Lanka, disgraced by being found guilty of ball-tampering, face a massive battle to save the first Test after records tumbled in Australia's run spree today, reports Reuter.

The touring team, warned by International Cricket Council (ICC) match referee Graham Dowling because the ball's condition was allegedly altered on Saturday, were hammered for 617 for five declared as Australia piled up a first innings lead of 366.

Sri Lanka were 13 for no wicket at the close on the third day which featured a landmark innings of 219 from Australian opener Michael Slater, 111 by Mark



M WAUGH ... 111

Waugh and 96 by Ricky Ponting on his Test debut.

It was a day of toil in the field for Sri Lanka as they tried to revive their fortunes after umpires Peter Parker and Pakistan's Khizer Hayat ruled they had altered the condition of the ball during the 17th over on the second day.

Dowling, the former New Zealand captain, took no further disciplinary action after his warning, but said a statement the umpires would take appropriate action if there was any further attempt to tamper with the ball.

It was the first instance of a team being officially found guilty of ball tampering during a Test.

Dowling's warning surprised Slater, who faced the most deliveries against the altered ball but told reporters he thought nothing out of the ordinary had occurred when the umpires first took action.

"It (the match referee's ruling) was a big surprise," Slater said during an impromptu press conference after his dismissal.

Asked if the ball did anything unusual in its movement in the air or off the pitch during his innings on Saturday, Slater said, "Nothing whatsoever. I thought it was a simple case of the ball going out of shape. That is what I thought was occurring."

The umpires had not replaced the ball after the tampering incident, but Sri Lanka took the second new ball at the start of today's play.

Slater, who resumed on 189 of the overnight 358 for two, was eventually dismissed for his highest first-class score, a superb innings lasting seven-and-a-half hours and containing five sixes and 15 fours.

Slater fell to a return catch by off-spinner Muttiah Muralidharan, ending a typically aggressive and entertaining display of strokeplay that established a new record for the ground, eclipsing teammate David Boon's 200 against New Zealand in the 1989-90 season.

Waugh maintained the momentum by reaching his 10th Test century after lunch, though studded with a succession of fine shots, it was subdued by his usual standards, lasting 261 minutes and 223 balls and including one six and seven fours.

Waugh was out when he edged a white delivery from pace bowler Chaminda Vaas to wicketkeeper Romesh Kaluwitharana.

Ponting, who fell leg before wicket to pace bowler Chaminda Vaas, walked dejectedly from the field alongside fellow debutant Stuart Law.

Law remained unbeaten on 54 after the inexperienced pair added 121 runs for the

fifth wicket. Australia's total beat their previous record for a Test against Sri Lanka of 514 for four declared at Kandy in the 1982-83 season.

SCOREBOARD Scoreboard on the third day of the first Test between Australia and Sri Lanka Sunday:

SRI LANKA: First innings 251 (Romesh Kaluwitharana 50, Glenn McGrath 4-18). AUSTRALIA: First innings (overnight 358 for two) Taylor lbw b De Silva 96 Slater c and b Muralidharan 219 Boon c Hathurusinghe b Muralidharan 13 M Waugh c Kaluwitharana b Vaas 111 Ponting lbw b Vaas 96 Law not out 54



SLATER ... 219

Extras (lb-4, lb-6, nb-18) 28 Total (for 5 wks, declared) 617

Fall of wickets: 1-228; 2-266; 3-422; 4-496; 5-617

Did not bat: Healy; Julian; Warner; McDermott; McGrath.

Bowling: O M R W Wickremasinghe 31 3 123 0 Vaas 31 5 103 2 Muralidharan 54 3 224 2 Dharmasena 31 5 84 0 De Silva 18 1 42 1 Hathurusinghe 9 3 31 0

SRI LANKA: Second innings

Mahanama not out 2 Hathurusinghe not out 7 Extras: (lb-1, nb-3) 4 Total: (for no wicket) 13 Bowling(to date) O M R W McDermott 1 0 7 0 McGrath 2 1 4 0 Warner 1 0 1 0

Rowdy fans!

CHIANG MAI, Thailand, Dec 10: Thousands of angry Thai soccer fans, frustrated at the prospect of not seeing their team play Vietnam at the Southeast Asian Games today, stormed the stadium gates until police allowed them to enter, reports Reuter.

About 5,000 angry fans pushed, shoved and threw cans and drinks at policemen outside the two front gates of the main stadium at the Chiang Mai Sports Centre as they demanded entry to see the qualifying game, eyewitnesses said.

Some of the disgruntled Thai supporters said they had been waiting for more than four hours to see if there were any tickets left for the hotly-contested contest between Thailand and surprise second-round qualifiers Vietnam.

When they were told just before the match started that there were only a limited number of seats left in the 20,000-seat stadium, the fans got upset and began storming the gates.

After failing to break up the riotous crowd, police finally opened the gates and allowed them in without tickets.

Some fans were trampled by the stampeding crowd after the gates were opened. No one was seriously injured.

An official with the SEA Games, a biennial event that began on Saturday, said earlier organisers were worried there would not be enough space in the various venues for the number of spectators expected to attend.

IAAF's noble gesture

MONACO, Dec 10: A special athletics event for peace, featuring the best athletes in the world, will be staged in Sarajevo next September, International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) president Primo Nebiolo said on Saturday.

Nebiolo told a news conference that all the athletes in the September 7 Grand Prix finals in Milan would fly to the Bosnian capital, ravaged by years of war, for the event.

"I would take it very badly if any of the athletes invited to Milan refused to go to Sarajevo for this humanitarian gesture," he said.

Nebiolo also said he hoped the IAAF would be able to stage the 1999 World Cross Country Championships in the Northern Ireland capital Belfast as another gesture towards peace.

Last year, rival guerilla groups declared a ceasefire in the British-ruled province after 25 years of sectarian violence.

Nebiolo announced another special event on May 7 next year in Atlanta to mark the inauguration of the athletics stadium for the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. He said young people and students from all over the world would be invited.

The world athletics chief said he was prepared to meet American athlete Michael Johnson this weekend to discuss his schedule for the Atlanta Games.

Johnson, world champion in the 200 and 400 metres, wants to double in the same events at the Olympics but is not satisfied that the programme would allow him to do so.

Nebiolo's rebuttal

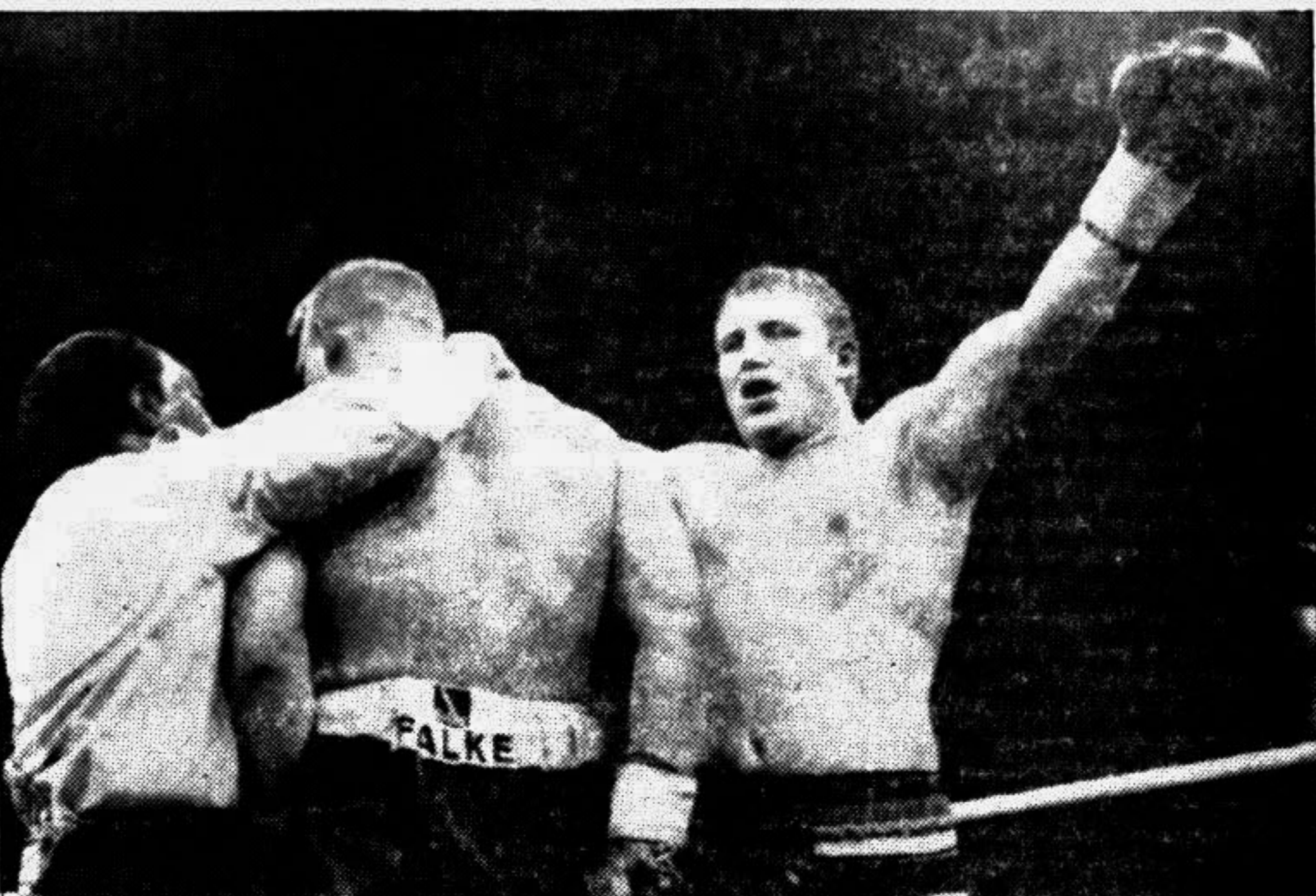
MANACO, Dec 10: World athletics chief Primo Nebiolo on Saturday denied allegations that he had ordered last year's athletes-of-the-year poll to be rigged, reports Reuter.

The allegations, carried on Friday in USA today, quoted former International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) press chief Christopher Winner as saying Nebiolo had told him to fix the poll by international journalists before the December awards ceremony.

But Nebiolo told Reuters: "I don't understand. I don't know what's going through his head. To say these things were arranged for the ceremony is stupid and false. My relations with him (Winner) were very good and I was very close to him even if he did have some personal problems."

Winner, who quit the IAAF earlier this year, told USA today Nebiolo had told him to fix the poll to ensure that only athletes who had agreed to attend the awards ceremony in Monaco were among the first three.

He said this meant that Briton Sally Gunnell, chosen by the IAAF sponsored journalists poll as female athlete-of-the-year, was put down to fourth place and the award was given to American Jackie Joyner-Kersey instead.



South African Francois Botha (R) raises his arms in triumph as German Challenger Axel Schulz (C) is led away by a referee during their bout for the vacant IBF world heavyweight title in Stuttgart on Dec 9. Botha captured the crown in a controversial decision. — AFP/UNB photo

Judges kick up a fuss



STUTTGART, Dec 10: Germany's first heavyweight title fight for nearly 20 years ended in disarray on Saturday night when angry fans hurled glasses and bottles at the ring after South African Francois Botha won a controversial points' decision over German Axel Schulz, report agencies.

Boxers, trainers and officials fled the arena after the German fans, chanting "fix," showered the ring with champagne bottles and glasses following the announcement of the result of the international Boxing Federation (IBF). Two of three judges had ruled in favour of the unbeaten Botha.

Stuttgart police said none of the boxers, trainers, officials or capacity 13,000 crowd, which included stars from the German and European sports and entertainment world, had suffered any serious injuries and there had been no arrests.

"Six people have been slightly injured," a police spokesman said early on Sunday. "But there were no arrests because it was not possible to see exactly where the objects came from."

The Schleyer-Halle arena, venue for World Championships in a wide range of sports, was packed with partisan German fans who roared encouragement for the 27-year-old former East German throughout the 12-round bout, which finished just before midnight (2300 GMT).

The bout pitted the top two challengers for the IBF crown given up by George Foreman, whose last fight was a controversial win over 12 rounds against Schulz.

Botha, who now lives in

Newport Beach, California, entered the fight with a 35-0 record and 21 knockouts, but hadn't faced any big names.

But Botha, whose next fight may be against Mike Tyson, is unlikely to silence critics of his ability. The man who has nicknamed himself "the white buffalo," proved to be an easy target to hit.

But he also threw more punches than his 27-year-old German opponent.

"I can understand the disappointment of the public — but their reaction was just an emotional outburst," said Botha's promoter, Don King. "But when you look at the fight objectively, you can see Botha deserved to win."

Neither fighter was in danger of hitting the canvas. Botha often stood in the middle of the ring, his hands lowered like his idol Muhammad Ali, during the light-hitting Schulz to hurt him.

But Schulz, with only 10 knockouts in his 21-3-1 record, lacked the punch to threaten the South African. He tagged Botha with several stiff rights, but barely jarred his opponent.

"The decision is a scandal," said Wilfried Sutherland, Schulz's promoter, but admitted, "Schulz was too tight and boxed too little."

Botha was the one that carried the fight, steadily piling up points with both hands against Schulz, who fought out of a peek-a-boo style and attacked in short flurries.

Botha appeared exhausted at the end of the sixth round, when he threw a couple of round house punches at the German. But this proved deceptive — he was visibly stronger than the German in the 12th and final round.

Botha became the second

fighter to hold a heavyweight crown after Gerrie Coetzee in 1983. His next fight may be against Tyson, another of Don King's fighters.

"We're just waiting to see who the winner will be," King said before the fight. "Then he can fight against Tyson."

Schulz failed in his bid to become the first German to win a heavyweight title since Max Schmeling beat Jack Sharkey 65 years ago.

After the sixth round, his manager, Manfred Wolke, yelled at Schulz in the corner: "You're going to have to knock him out — I don't trust the judges."

Judge Harry Davis of Canada ruled the fight 116-112 for Botha, while Eugene Grant of the United States saw the South African winning 115-113. Another American, Al de Vito, called it 115-113 for Schulz.

Botha, whose purse was reportedly 2.5 million dollars, weighed 103 kilos (227 pounds), while Schulz came in at 101 (222 pounds).

Germany last staged a heavyweight title bout in 1976 when Muhammad Ali beat Britain's Richard Dunn in Munich.

On the undercard there were also two other fights involving Americans.

Frank Liles of Syracuse, New York, retained his WBA Super middleweight title by pouncing out a unanimous decision over Brazil's Mauricio Amaral. Liles weighed in at 76 kilos (168 pounds).

Tom Johnson of Detroit, Michigan was knocked down three times, but won a narrow decision over Jose Badillo of Puerto Rico to retain his IBF featherweight title. The two men weighed 57 kilos (125 pounds).

Laxman enlivens Sharjah



SHARJAH, Dec 10: An internal squabble of UAE team overshadowed India's VVS Laxman's brilliant unbeaten 102 in a rain-hit four-nation Inter-Interface Cup cricket tournament here Saturday, reports PTI.

Put into bat, India 'A' amassed 254 for four in the stipulated 50 overs but heavy downpour compelled umpires Tariq Butt and Farid Malik to abandon the match at 3 pm local time.

UAE's acting captain Vijay Mehra won the toss and rightly asked India to bat with the clouds threatening to pour.

India's batting started off on a slow and sedate note with seamers Johanne Samarasekera and 39-year-old bespectacled Shehzad Altaf bowling to a tidy line and length restricting the opening batsmen Gagan Kohda and Vikram Rathore.

Laxman dominated the match which began 40 minutes late as UAE skipper Sultan Zarawani and Emirates

Cricket Board took time to settle their differences. Zarawani was advised to rest his knee. Zarawani, who recently had a knee operation in Germany, insisted that he was fit. After protracted discussions the match resumed with Mehra leading the side.

Samarasekera was more menacing of the two seamers as he had Kohda snapped up by Dayanan Banger. Kohda, who played a scintillating knock of 41 in Friday's match against arch-rivals Pakistan, made only two runs.

Next to go was skipper Vikram Rathore who was trapped by an inswinging off Samarasekera that straightened late to uproot his stumps. At this stage India seemed in deep trouble having lost two wickets at a meagre score of 26.

Run scoring became more difficult as Shehzad, who was not included in the UAE team for the ICC Trophy in Kenya last year, bowled very economically. He bowled 10 overs unchanged giving away only 12 runs.

Then came Laxman, who virtually held the centre stage with a fine unbeaten 102. Most of his runs came

through singles as he found gaps at will and scored his runs off 125 balls hitting only one four. Laxman grabbed the opportunity that came way after he was picked in the eleven in place of Amol Majumdar, who had poor run of scores in the two previous matches.

India also brought in Prashant Vadya in place of Salil Ankola but unfortunately did not get a chance to impress with the ball following the curtailment of the match. Rahul Dravid, the toast of India's win over Pakistan Friday, continued his fine form as he scored 63 in 94 balls including five hits to the fence.

However, Pravin Amre, out in the wilderness for over two years, brightened up the proceedings and helped India speed up the run-rate. Playing a characteristic flick, Amre sent a Samarasekera ball pitched on the leg stump over the square leg boundary. Amre's well compiled 54 came off only 32 balls as he also reached the ropes five time during his innings.

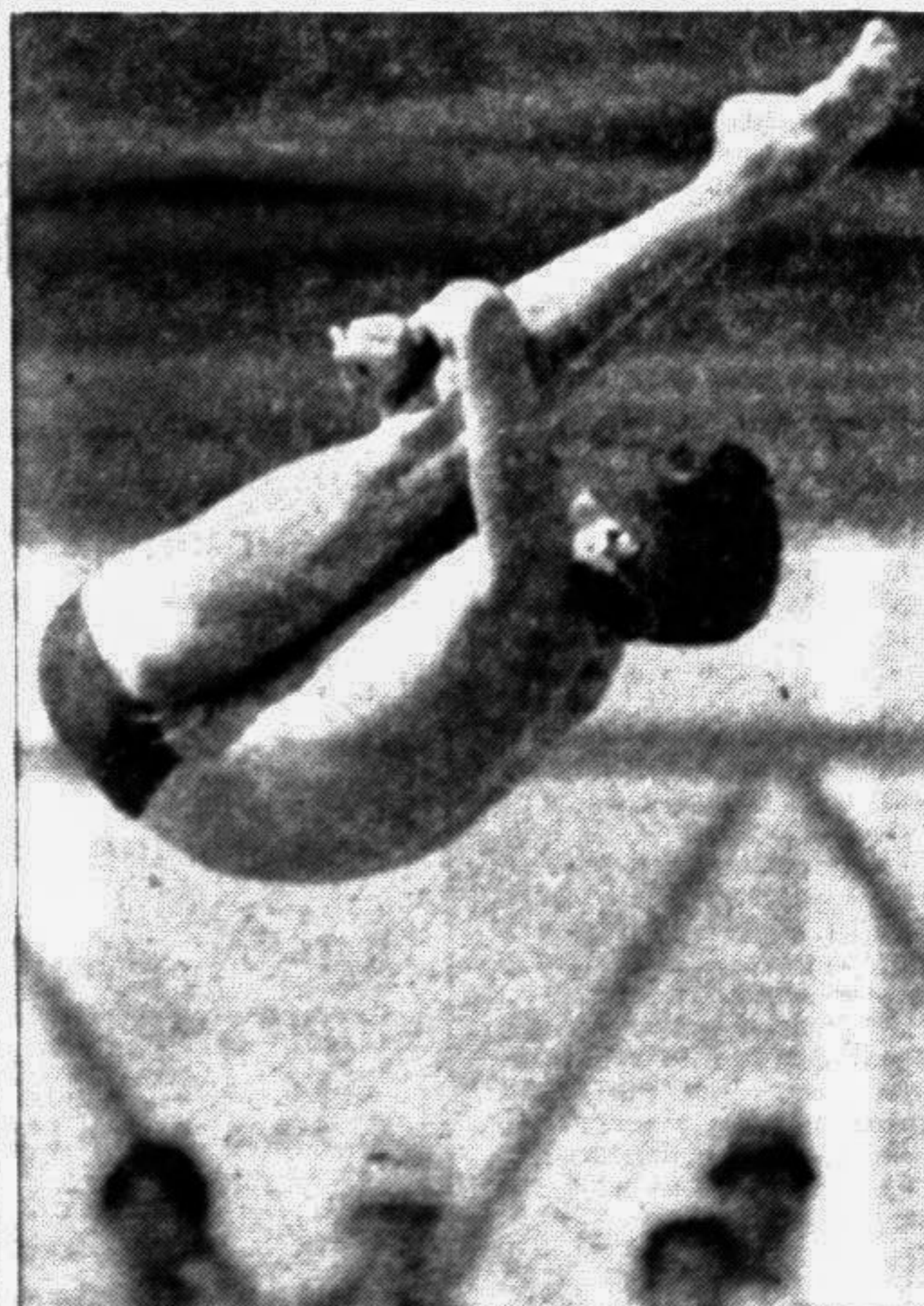
Laxman was associated in two big partnerships, first Laxman and Dravid added 127 for the third wicket in 184 balls. Then with Amre he added 89 runs in only 54 balls for the fourth wicket.

First stoppage of the game came after 41.4 overs with the light drizzle and lunch was taken early. However, heavy rains after completion of the Indian innings ruled out any play. India are now in the final to be played on Tuesday, December 12.

SCOREBOARD Scoreboard of the limited overs cricket match between India 'A' and UAE in the four-nation Inter-Interface Cup cricket tournament here on Saturday:

INDIA 'A': Gagan Kohda c Banger b Samarasekera 2 Vikram Rathore b Samarasekera 9 VVS Laxman (not out) 102 Rahul Dravid b Hussein 63 Pravin Amre b Laq 54 Saurav Ganguly (not out) 5 Extras: (lb-9, w-9, nb-1) 19 Total (for four wickets in 50 overs) 254 Fall of wickets: 1-9; 2-26; 3-153; 4-242 Bowling O M R W Altaf 10 5 12 0 Samarasekera 8 0 56 2 Laq 10 0 41 1 Azhar Saeed 10 0 47 0 Dukarwala 5 0 37 0 Hussein 7 0 52 1

Result: Match abandoned Man-of-the-match: Shared by VVS Laxman (India 'A') and Johanne Samarasekera (UAE)



Suchat Pichi of Thailand in action during the 3-metre springboard event at the 18th Southeast Asian Games in Chiang Mai yesterday. Pichi took the gold scoring 676.80. — AFP/UNB photo

Edwards, Gwen IAAF's best



MONACO, Dec 9: Britain's world record breaker Jonathan Edwards and American sprint queen Gwen Torrence were named athletes-of-the-year by the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) on Saturday, reports Reuter.

The awards came a day after allegations that last year's poll was rigged on the orders of IAAF chief Primo Nebiolo. The IAAF has denied the allegations.

Edwards broke the world triple jump record three

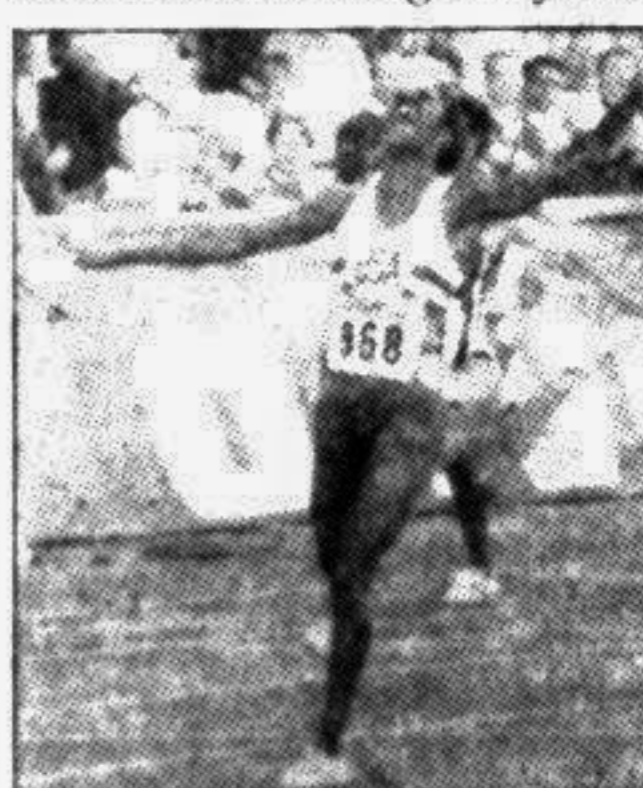
and became the first man to break the 18-metre barrier.

"I am honoured and very excited to have been given this prestigious award," he said. "This has been a really incredible year for athletics with some great performances so to win means a great deal."

Edwards beat world 10,000 metres champion Haile Gebrselassie by just 19 votes in the annual poll of journalists and others involved on the athletics circuit. The Ethiopian broke the world 5,000 and 10,000 metres records during the year.



JONATHAN EDWARDS



GWEN TORRENCE

times during the season, twice in winning the world title at Gothenburg in August.

American Michael Johnson, winner of three gold medals in Gothenburg, was

Following is the list of IAAF award winners:

Table with 2 columns: Top 10 men and Top 10 women, listing names and points.

100 metres world title and robbed of a 200 metres victory by disqualification, said: "I'm really looking forward to winning the 100 and 200 metres Olympic titles in my home town next year."

The American from Atlanta was a clear winner over Irish world 5,000 metres champion Sonia O'Sullivan and Kim Batten, the American who broke the world 400 metres hurdles record to win the world title in Gothenburg.

The awards were presented at the annual IAAF gala in Monaco.

On Friday, former IAAF press chief Christopher Winner was quoted by USA Today as saying that Nebiolo ordered the 1994 poll to be rigged to ensure that the awards would go to athletes who were attending the gala, to make the ceremony more attractive to television.

Winner said British hurdler Sally Gunnell was demoted from first to fourth place and the women's award was given instead to American heptathlete Jackie Joyner-Kersey.

Nebiolo denied the allegations on Saturday, saying: "To say these things were arranged for the ceremony is false and stupid."

FINA takes some flak

KARUIZAWA, Japan, Dec 10: The International Olympic Committee said on Tuesday a new four year suspension on doping offenders adopted by the International Swimming Federation (FINA) last week was too stiff, reports Reuter. We must give penalties but they must not be so severe for an athlete to be virtually banned from taking part in future events," IOC board member Richard Pound of Canada said